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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2009

In Today's Papers

A Turkish President, For The First Time, Pronounces 'Kurdistan'
(Hurriyet)
Media outlets report Turkish President Abdullah Gul and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani held a joint press conference after their meeting in Baghdad. Gul said, "Terror is a plague that must be defeated," and he emphasized the importance of "cooperation with the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government in the fight against PKK terror." Gul added, "We have decided to end the security problems between our countries." Talabani said the PKK was "poisoning the ties between Turkey and Iraq," and was "blocking the return of Iraqis to 500 villages in northern Iraq." The Iraqi President set an ultimatum for the PKK, "Disarm or leave Iraq."

En route to Baghdad, President Gul spoke with journalists aboard his plane. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak writes Gul issued important messages on his way to Iraq, saying "The bloodshed will end and brotherhood will be strengthened." "The 'Kurdistan Regional Administration' in Iraq is the main actor in efforts to end the terror activities against Turkish territory," said Gul, becoming the first Turkish official to use the word 'Kurdistan' to define the northern Iraqi administration. "Gul breaks another taboo, and refers to the regional administration of northern Iraq as 'Kurdistan,'" says the leftist Taraf. In "Gul Names It," liberal Radikal writes on its front page that Gul has pronounced, for the first time, 'Kurdistan' in reference to the administration in northern Iraq.

Papers also report that in April, the Kurdish groups based in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Europe will gather in Erbil at an international Kurdish conference. The Kurdish groups to participate in the conference are expected to call on the PKK to disarm. The conference will be organized by the KRG, and the conference is also expected to urge Turkey to declare a general amnesty for the PKK. Turkey's main pro-Kurdish political party DTP will be invited to the talks. Mainstream Aksam says the PKK would be represented "indirectly" at the conference by the northern Iraq-based 'Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party.' "Talabani and Barzani promised the conference would not produce anything that would anger Turkey," says

Aksam.

Editorial Commentary on Gul Visit to Iraq

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "It was important that President Gul made a call to everyone to do his or her part in finding a solution to the Kurdish problem. That message is relevant for Turkey as well as the Iraqi Kurds."

Fehmi Kuru wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "President Gul's trip to Baghdad opened a new era for relations between Turkey and Iraq; it also paved the way toward the elimination of the PKK problem. Turkey and Iraq are very determined and do not want to sacrifice bilateral ties on account of the PKK. Obviously every possible method is on the table to solve the problem."

Colonel Detained in Connection to "Death Wells" Investigation
Sabah, Bugun, Star, Posta, Vatan, Milliyet, Aksam, Hurriyet and others: The Commander of the Kayseri Provincial Gendarmerie Regiment Colonel Cemal Temizoz was detained yesterday in connection with the ongoing investigation into human remains found in wells in Cizre town of Sirnak province. Mainstream Sabah notes that Colonel Temizoz was Cizre's Gendarmerie commander during 1992-1994 while tabloid Aksam in turn says that he was in the region from 1993 to 1996. Temizoz has been sent to Diyarbakir for interrogation.

Erdogan: "Only Incompetent Businessmen Were Affected by the Economic Crisis"

Hurriyet, Sabah, Taraf, Referans, Milliyet, Vatan: Speaking at the election rally in Bolu yesterday, PM Erdogan dismissed the

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allegations of opposition leaders that many factories and the businesses were forced to shut down during the crisis. Erdogan said "These allegations (of a financial crisis) are exaggerated. There is no truth in this. Only incompetent businessmen might have been affected by the crisis and forced to shut down their businesses."

Turks Not Keen on Rasmussen

Leftist Taraf reports, "Ankara Is Not Warm To Rasmussen's Candidacy." Liberal Radikal reports, "Ankara is concerned about the approach Denmark took during the 'Mohammed Cartoon' controversy when the government supported the cartoonists under the umbrella of 'freedom of thought.'" Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet calls for "A Veto Against the Man Who Gave Prime Time to Terror," by allowing Roj TV, a television broadcast station with connections to the PKK, to be broadcast in Denmark despite the protests from Turkish leaders. Mainstream Sabah, a paper known to be close to the government, calls Rasmussen, "The man who embraces Roj TV with open arms and who drew world reactions to the way he handled the Mohammed cartoon crisis." Sabah also says "The U.S. supports Rasmussen, but Turkey is clearly against him," because "he makes Ankara feel uncomfortable."

Turkey is Preparing to Send More Troops to Afghanistan (NTV)
Media outlets expect U.S. President Barack Obama will ask Turkish leaders for additional troops for the NATO mission in Afghanistan. NTV is already reporting that "The Turkish General Staff is preparing to send more troops to Afghanistan," with the caveat that the Turkish troops "serve in the Kabul command unit." In "New Turkish Troops to Kabul," mainstream Milliyet reports "The TGS is preparing to send an additional 700 soldiers to Kabul in August," and "If Turkish troops are asked to serve outside of Kabul, TGS prefers that they serve under the command of Uzbek General Rashit Dostum, who commands an area in the north."

Meanwhile, Islamist papers take note of Obama's statements regarding the NATO operations in Afghanistan during his interview with 60 Minutes. In "Civil and Military Signals from Obama," Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "Obama came to office on the slogan of 'change' and now he is changing NATO." Islamist-oriented Zaman highlights Obama told 60 Minutes, "The situation in Afghanistan cannot be solved through military force alone."

Editorial Commentary on Afghanistan

Fikret Ertan wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "During this past

Sunday's edition of CBS' 60 Minutes, President Obama gave a clear indication of his major policy focus on Afghanistan. More attention must be placed on the issues concerning the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA), which have not been dealt with properly to date. These FATAs are the root of the problem and these problems must be addressed through military, political and social actions."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- The second indictment in the Ergenekon investigation will be announced Wednesday and will seek life without parole sentences for retired generals Sener Eruygur and Hursit Tolon on charges of leading a criminal organization to topple a civilian government.
- Six employees at the Swiss UBS bank's Singapore HQ, who were responsible for managing the USD 300 million-worth assets of Turkish investors, have been fired, prompting speculation over whether there was fraud in the bank's transactions.
- The state-run TRT television is preparing to launch radio broadcasts in the Armenian language prior to the visit of President Obama to Turkey.
- Turkey and Canada signed a civil aviation agreement March 13,

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according to which Turkish Airlines and Air Canada will make three scheduled passenger flights and three cargo flights a week between the two countries.

World

- An explosion in a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon kills senior Fatah official Kemal Medat and three of his bodyguards. Medat was working for reconciliation between Hamas and al-Fatah.
- Turkish Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat will pay a visit to the United States at the end of March.
- Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir traveled to Eritrea Monday on his first trip abroad since the ICC sought his arrest on charges of war crimes in Darfur.
- In an article in the Financial Times, the former UNDP chief Kemal Dervis lists proposals for economic recovery as the global crisis deepens.
- President Obama has held talks with Mikhail Gorbachev, a spokesman for the former Soviet leader says.

JEFFREY